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DEPARTMENT FOR DRL/AE WENDY SILVERMAN AND EUR/CARC LANE BAHL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/26/2017

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [OSCE](#) [KDEM](#) [EUN](#) [AJ](#) [IT](#)

SUBJECT: ITALY SHARES CONCERN ABOUT MEDIA FREEDOM IN
AZERBAIJAN

REF: SECSTATE 99391

Classified By: Political M/C David D. Pearce for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Poloff delivered reftel demarche to MFA Office Director for Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Europe Marco Clemente July 25 and discussed recent troubling developments in regard to media freedom, freedom of assembly and due process in Azerbaijan. Poloff urged Italy to maintain its engagement with the GOAJ and to speak out in support of democratic reforms.

¶2. (C) Among the areas of concern outlined reftel, Clemente said he is most concerned about the state of media freedom in Azerbaijan. He said the Italian embassy in Baku has been pursuing active but "quiet" diplomacy to encourage change on the part of the GOAJ. Clemente noted the Italian embassy had reported the GOAJ was considering announcing clemency for jailed journalists and a moratorium on the defamation law used to jail journalists in connection with the July 22 Media Day, although to his knowledge the GOAJ has as yet taken no such action. Clemente said he believed the coordinated, international pressure on the GOAJ was having an effect, and although the situation remained troublesome, he did see signs of positive movement.

¶3. (C) Clemente said he understood that the European Commission planned to open its mission in Azerbaijan shortly, and while he did not have the name of the Head of Mission, he believed one would be named soon.

¶4. (C) Clemente said Italy has been and will remain a partner of the U.S. in Azerbaijan, and he believed there to be good cooperation between the various Western diplomatic missions in Baku.

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